

Session 12 Optional Class Activity: Guest Panel

PLANNING:

1. Review the suggested questions for panelists and select which to ask the panel members. Feel free to add additional questions.
2. Invite 4-5 couples to participate in the panel discussion. Strive to find couples who represent diverse backgrounds, ages, and ethnicities and a variety of histories (first marriage, second marriage, couples who lived together prior to marriage, blended families, etc.). Consider inviting appropriate members of your staff, board, or any advisory committees to serve on the panel. Or you might contact local faith-based organizations who often have members who are willing to donate time to such activities.
3. Make sure panel members understand the overall goal of this session, which is allowing for the group to see what a real marriage looks like, but not deterring them from marriage.
4. Review the questions from the teacher resource that you are going to ask each couple prior to the session. Also be sure to call and remind the panelists a few days before and perhaps on the day of the event.

PROCEDURE:

1. Explain to the group that today they will have a chance to talk to a variety of married couples who are willing to talk honestly about their experiences with marriage.
2. Have the panel members introduce themselves by sharing:
 - Their names and ages
 - How long they have been married
 - Ages of their children (joint children and children from former relationships)
 - Why they chose to participate on the panel
3. After the panel has finished their introductions, ask the students to introduce themselves to the panel members and share their names and ages.
4. Explain to the group that you have prepared some questions for the panel members, but that the discussion is informal, and participants are encouraged to ask their own questions as well. Let panelists know that they don't each have to answer every question. Sometimes you will ask everyone to answer, and other times you will call on volunteers.
5. Begin asking the questions you selected from the leader resource. Be sure to stop your questioning after about 20 minutes so you can open up the discussion to the group at large. Encourage participants to ask anything they want, making it clear that panelists have the right to pass if something is too personal or uncomfortable for them.
6. When time is up, thank the panelists for sharing their thoughts and time with the group.